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AUTHOR Metelka, Charles J.
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ABSTRACT

Even as conceptual models, distinctions between "rural" and "urban" have become blurred--by changes in transportation, telecommunications, computer technology, business expertise, formal education, health care, and citizenry expectations/knowledge. Two typologies describing future trends and incorporating changes in rural/urban definitions facilitate observation, research, and decision making. Typology I, the selective incorporation of urban and attributive-to-urban values, symbols, processes, perspectives, and behaviors into rural life is a neutral, casual process. Typology II, ruralification of urban life, is a most dynamic typology since urban planning can use the urban setting itself as one of a myriad of interacting environmental variables. Examples of urban ruralification include green belts and pocket parks, proliferation of clubs and associations, and "neighborhood watch" protection strategies. Area planning, greater freedom of industry location, new communications systems, and an increasingly aware citizenry will soon enable society to select the best from both ways of life to create a new "hybrid" lifestyle. Societal life in the future will be a series of "lifestyle layers," each being relatively free of geographic designation, and will be based upon the person's/family's/community's decision as to how the hybrid options are to be combined. (NEC)

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THE AMERICAN DREAM: A CROSSOVER OF COMMUNITY IMAGERY

By

Charles J. Metelka, Ph.D.
Professor
University of Wisconsin-Stout

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"The American Dream: A Crossover of Community Imagery"

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The distinction between "rural" and "urban", even as coneeptual models, has become blurred. Reevaluation of early thoughts on this distinction tends to identify the bias of the writers; the praise or condemnation, so often a part of the early models, was usually a consequence of the author's socio-geographic residence rather than an objective reporting of the facts. The anthropologist, sociologist or journalist tended to be a "prisoner" of his/her urban residency, social status, urban education, and the historical events of the time. The writers reported what they observed; the problem was one of inaccurate observation and interpretation of underlying meanings and processes.

This inaccuracy would have been identified much earlier if there were sufficient numbers of equally authoritative rural-oriented researchers preparing reports that contradicted what was being disseminated by the major social science "Schools" in the heyday of "demographic impressionistic" reporting. Almost by definition such academic types did not exist. Given the turmoil of the industrial revolution, the level of immigration to the U.S.A., the then-unrecognized bias of reputable researchers and the human suffering/corruption detailed by journalists of the period, the evidence seemed overwhelming and irrefutable. Urban life was overwhelmingly declared"dangerous to your health".

In addition to the above-mentioned biases, four other contributors to the process can be identified. First, rural migrants to urban areas

tended to find a life much different than envisioned. Life on the farm was favorably and selectively recalled after one was trapped in an urban ghetto tenement. Rural migrants were living proof of the city's false promises. Second, anthropologists of the time were having a field day (forgive the pun) reporting on the apparently honest, smiling, native ways of life of "simpler" cultures in the Pacific and elsewhere. Indeed, contemporary researchers should be able to recall when, as students, these anthropological papers were introduced as "classics." Lacking the insight that these classic reports were seriously in error, readers at an earlier time were in possession of additional "proof" that the city was dehumanizing. Third, the close proximity of the urban rich and poor, the daily mobility of the urban resident and the urban media confirmed that the city was indeed a "fun place" to live—but only if you were rich. Two urban images existed comfortably side-by-side. For a select few the city was the gold coast; for the majority it was the slum.

A fourth process which tended to "prove" the irresistable evil of the city and pristine beauty of the rural must be identified. Photo journalist and research efforts evidencing the shortcomings of rural life certainly did exist throughout the general historic period in question. It is suggested here that such efforts at describing rural life in a more accurate, less idealistic way tended to "backfire" image-wise. The predominantly urban readers/viewers of such accounts and photo-stories did not see the poverty, the racial turmoil or the lack of adequate education; instead, they observed the open space, the trees in the background and the fresh vegetables on the farm dinner table.

Later, more contemporary analysts tended to conclude that while different, both ways of life had their relative shortcomings and strengths. Slowly, both the general public and the academic community became aware of the details of the descriptive accounts for each way of life. Socio-economic conditions changed,

physical mobility permitted some amount of first hand observation. Perhaps it could be argued that we no longer had the psychological need to maintain these mental utopias, at least not to the degree of earlier times. Whatever other reasons existed, one major force was that the social sciences community was finally becoming research oriented, with sufficient internal strength of professionalism to persuasively question the revered "facts" of earlier colleagues.

While social science wrestled with the qualities of each typology, the citizenry were constructing and acting in accordance with their own images of the rural and urban. The rural area resident had no problem with his observations; the net increase migration from rural to urban areas was a fact of life until the 1980s. To the rural resident the city was the place to make it rich, the symbol of success, a tourist destination and a model for "what our town could be" if all went right. To be sure, the city was imagined as a place of real and "permissible" sin and danger. The "city slicker" and "ladies of questionable character" served as both attractions and warnings. Similarly, urban residents entertained notions of rural life. Overall, the images were more favorable for the urban resident; the rural life was typified by a slower pace, with time to relax and enjoy nature, neighbors and family.

Both of these resident images involved an envy for the other way of life. Each group incorporated behaviors and artifacts of the other so as to establish a symbolic status-enhancing link. The rural resident made his periodic trip to the city returning with some urban gadgetry, clothing and verbal expressions. Status was enhanced when one's business dealings necessitated such travel. As an area the rural town followed a similar orientation, the construction of a tall building with an elevator, stop lights or a parking lot was often favorable front page news in the local newspaper.

The urban counterpart exhibited behavior that was somewhat more complex. The majority of urban residents were at some point transplanted from a rural environment. This historical factor was diminished in importance over generations with the effect that urban images of the rural are no longer based in fact/experience. The urban person incorporates the rural as real or envisioned into daily life in many ways. One might say that as urbanization increased rural symbolism increased. Automobiles are named Sierra, Cougar, Mustang; supermarkets stress country fresh, fresh from the farm, home baked; products are promoted as hand crafted; western clothing comes into fashion. Moreover, the urban resident regards the weekend vacation in the country to be a necessity and a right--not a frivolous privilege. Second homes in rural settings are valued symbols of status.

Suburban living is a well researched phenomenon. In the context of this paper the suburbs constituted the urban residents' realization of a compromise between the city/urban and his rural-as-imagined lifestyle. Trees, livestock in the form of pets and a garden, all when located near employment, equaled the best of both worlds.

All of the above is historical in the sense that the contemporary/future relationship of urban and rural will be substantially different. At this point it is appropriate to caution the reader. To the extent that this author is correct, accurate or "on to something" the words "urban" and "rural" diminish in their accuracy of meaning. Just as the early description of the automobile as a "horseless carriage" failed to accurately incorporate the social revolution which transpired, the future cannot be viewed as a mere extension of the "rural" and/or "urban". Similar problems of definition exist with the technological inventions of the computer, atomic energy or television and the social inventions of the credit card, democracy and individual rights. No one of them is merely an extension of what existed previously.

The inadequacy of the original concepts of rural and urban can be demonstrated by the fact that the area planning technique of "green belts' is an urban invention that mimics the open space found accidently in rural settings. Green belts are carefully planned areas designed to serve as buffers. In a rural setting open land is little more than land for which no one has yet identified a purpose. As a consequence it is often the case that so-called rural towns could benefit from the application of green belt zoning.

Another example of this inadequacy of existing concepts is offered; the high value of land in an urban area might make it feasible to locate a parking lot entirely underground thereby freeing the surface for use as a park or other green space. The rural community would tend to solve its parking problems with asphalt.

In addition to the inaccuracy of existing terms, there exists the problem of classifying, indeed naming, factors which were never rural or urban but which have been adopted/incorporated into the definitions as if they were originally found in one or the other setting. These factors include historic sites, fitness trails, bikeways, pedestrian malls as well as commercial-for-profit hybrids of rural and urban as the garden theme restaurant and of course Disneyworld.

Definitional apologies and limitations aside, two typologies will now be introduced to describe future trends. Each is based on the fact that transportation, telecommunications, computer technology, business expertise, formal education, health care and citizenry expectations/knowledge have changed radically.

TYPOLOGY I - URBANIZATION OF THE RURAL

This typology highlights the observation that residents are selectively incorporating urban and attributed-to-urban values, symbols, processes, perspectives and behaviors into their way of life.

TYPOLOGY II - RURALIFICATION OF THE URBAN

This typology highlights the observation that urban residents are selectively incorporating rural and attributed-to-rural values, symbols, processes, perspectives and behaviors into their way of life.

We are now at a point where we strive to pick and choose--to selectively retain, incorporate and exclude facets of what was once rural or urban. The urban resident desires a neighborhood identity; bikeways, open/green spaces, community activities and involvement. Highrises, asphalt and increased traffic are no longer de facto signs of progress. The rural resident is equally selective; only certain businesses are welcome to move in. Historical preservation and area theme research are valued. Employment is always vital but both rural and urban seem to be "meeting in the middle;" traditional urban workers demand more participation while the traditional rural worker is prepared to accept the discipline that comes with distant market requirements. Linked by computers, telephone and television, isolation and immunity are impossible. Our ignorance especially in the form of cherished myths of the "other" way of life is increasingly decreased.

It is important to note that the two typologies are related but seperate. The processes included in Typology I, Urbanization of the Rural, could have occured alone. Indeed, there exists impressive evidence in the form of megacities, urban sprawl and urbanized strips as from Milwaukee, Wisconsin to New York City, that urbanization was the only future in our future.

While seperate, the two typologies are related. The processes and discussion are not, however, merely a way of describing the "midpoint" of a rural-urban continum. The traditional fear of so-called urbanization was based on the assumption that the negative consequences could not be avoided. Assuming our inability to control the process and our belief that the rural life was

qualitatively superior given the bias discussed above, fear was normal.

As proposed here, Urbanization of the Rural is a neutral, indeed favorable process. Rural area people are making choices and are no longer in awe of "urban" services. Be it ever so humble the old farmhouse now has the latest in communication technology, fringe television families enjoy video cassettes. Small towns having tanning parlors, McDonalds and USA Today. The computer helps manage the farm. The rural farming cooperative has been transformed into a major economic force modeled on the urban system of stringent controls and detailed forecasts. To the casual passerby, the farms along the highways may be a picture of rural tranquility and rural values. However, in operation they approximate the best of corporate strategy.

In short, the rural area is no longer isolated or limited in its services because of factors outside of its control. Isolated towns and households do exist but primarily because they choose to be isolated.

Rural areas have the potential to be as urban as they choose to be. Businesses cannot move in unless they are welcome. By means of zoning codes and local ordinances, the presence or absence of industrial parks, tax incentives and in general, planning, a rural area can reasonably control its degree and rate of urbanization. More important it can select the types of "urbanization" it wants to have.

The typology of Urbanization of the Rural is also profitably applied to the so-called rural family. As noted above, the contents of the old farmhouse might be in shocking contrast to the exterior. Expressways and purchasing through catalogues permit as much personal contract with urban areas as desired. Clothing is situational ranging from"local" overalls to the latest in designer fashions. Rural restaurants can offer whatever the customer wants due to the technology of freezer and microwave.

Typology II, Ruralification of the Urban, is perhaps the more dynamic of the two typologies. Urban areas are no longer regarded as to-be-tolerated "givens" but rather, a myriad of interacting variables. Roadways are used to foster or discourage other changes. The meandering roadway permits human existence by discouraging high speed and high volume traffic. The roadway is redefined as a right-of-way to be shared by bikes and pedestrians. Old buildings are modernized, enshrined, moved or razed--the citizens know they have a choice. Technology makes the urban setting a variable; highrise buildings provide an economic justification for surrounding green belts; trees can be planted, ponds built; malls and domes make weather an option. The city is a landscape of living contrasts. In the context of this paper, the city is, or rather is tending to be, the culmination of rational decision making. Be it a new skyscraper or a pocket park, nothing of the urban area need be left to chance. Nothing of the urban area can be left to chance.

There is an old saying that fish would be the last creatures to discover water. We generally fail to notice our own environment. In this sense it took the urban resident to "discover" the frailty of nature and the value of things "rural". Clean air was an urban discovery; likewise the value of pure water, of privacy and many others. Recent history documents that public and legal battles to save what was left of rural and natural resources were strongly influenced by persons transplanted from urban areas. To a great degree the environmental values held by urban residents are rural in orientation and basis. In fact these "rural" values are urban creations, for the rural resident never consciously valued trees, clean air, silence and open space; he assumed them. The Ruralification of the Urban is involved in that the urbanite seeks values attributed as existing in rural areas. Conversely, the rural residents following the urban lead by recognizing and protecting resources they once

took for granted.

The individual urban family has also incorporated the rural into daily existence. Real wood is back in vogue. Home cooking, open kitchens and indeed even kitchen table conversations are enjoying renewed popularity. Gardening is a major socio-economic activity. Rural-type sociability flourishes in the urban setting via a proliferation of clubs and associations. People have become friends again meeting around outdoor grills, in hot tubs, athletic clubs, pool halls and restaurants.

Both urban and rural areas are beginning to realize that they must approach the ideal of being self-supporting. One crop economies based upon automobile production, wheat, tourism or computers are dangerous. Planned diversification and selective incentives ("decentives") are the only way to assure a livable future. The concept of self-supporting is historically grounded in the rural family-villages-town. Cities were never self-supporting in that they always rely on rural agricultural production.

The "neighborhood watch" protection strategies gaining acceptance today in urban areas are little more than the "rediscovery" of rural concern for self and neighbor. For better or worse, rural oriented persons hold strongly to an insider/outsider demarcation. Nationalities were important, "townies" were distinct from others; family "roots" in the community were major definers of role and status. Ruralification of the Urban in this context takes the form of reestablishing insider-outsider status along racial, socio-economic, educational, occupational and age designations. Buildings have security systems, residential neighborhoods are walled and guarded, ethnic pride is fostered, persons of like occupations, family status and recreational interests come together. The racquetball clubs, singles bars and jogging paths are rural in social function; condominum owners exercise their right to screen the compatibility of prospective buyers.

The community now regards it as appropriate and possible to select its options, residents and industry. This awareness and exercise of evaluation and selection is an inherent part of a rebirth of a sense of place. As a people we have tried unlimited change under the false titles of development and progress. While the experiment was noble, we were "rewarded" with congestion, pollution, seasonally flooded homes due to lack of codes and the pains of a boom-bust area economy. As a people we tried a symbolic return to earlier "simpler" times via nostalgia in fashions, architecture and entertainment. While the craze continues it is now recognized as merely an enjoyable diversion. As a final venture we tried to move to the rural area only to find that we brought our urban problems along with us.

The typologies suggest that what is beginning to occur now in both rural and urban areas is something new and radically different. Telecommunications, new industries and computers will make it possible--necessary--for us to live where we work. The electronic village of persons working at home is one option. Given our new high value for time and the techno-economic justification, cities will become livable again. As a people we will no longer tolerate the waste of time and resources and the cost of commuting daily from a home that permits life to a place of employment located in an area that makes a mockery of these same values.

Modern technology is a vital factor in our future. Telecommunications in the form of voting/responding through television or 800 phone numbers recreates the town meeting in both immediacy and impact. Responsible coverage of local events is possible not only because local news "sells" but also because of the 4000+ low power stations soon to be licensed by the Federal Communications Commission. Finally, we and our elected/appointed officials no longer need to rely on guesswork and insight when projecting the effects of contemplated actions. Computer models will permit reasonable scenarios of the consequences of changes on roadways, businesses, housing, water supply and any other factors.

The opportunity for society to select the best from both ways of life has never been more possible. Area planning, a greater freedom of industry location, revolutionary new communications systems and an increasingly aware citizenry portent the creation of a new series of "hybrid" lifestyles. Societal life in the future may be better described as a series of "lifestyle layers." Each layer will be relatively free of geographic designation. Each will be based upon the person's/family's/community's decision as to how the hybrid options are to be combined. The political, economic and technological stimuli and responses to these changes in society will be interesting to say the least. It is the hope of this author that the typologies facilitate observation, research and decision making, and above all, participation.